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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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AUTHORIZATION.

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PRAYER AND PROVIDENCE.

I propose to make some comments upon the passage of Scripture which I read as a part of the opening service—namely, the 6th chapter of the gospel according to Matthew, beginning with the 19th verse:

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

I do not like even to seem to contradict the face of Scripture; and yet, as this passage has been largely understood, and is to-day understood, nothing could be more at variance with the teaching of the Scripture elsewhere, and nothing could be more at variance with the history and outflow of Christian morality under the divine economy and providence. If we are to interpret the Sermon upon the Mount without any rudder, without any central virtue which shall throw all these various economic commands into their relative positions, then I know not how we can avoid accepting statements which are contradicted by every step of the world's history since the day of their utterance. The rudder of this passage is in the last part of it, as it is in a ship:

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

So, then, all these things are the very things we have been told not to seek. Seek the kingdom of God, and you shall have those things which you need, but which you are told not to seek.

Now, it is very certain that if they are in and of themselves mischievous, it is poor economy to receive them in any

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way. I understand the general teaching of this Sermon on the Mount, in so far as these economic truths are concerned, to be this: that a man is not developed by the external. It is not bodily strength, nor bodily skill, nor accumulation of the ordinary sources of enjoyment—those that feed the ear, and the eye, and the palate, and the different senses—that a man's life consists of. A man's life is within. It consists of the kingdom of God that is developed within us—of our nobler manhood; and in that nobler manhood we are to dwell; and the things which do not make for that, but which make for the gratification of the body, and for the lower and outward life, do not belong to that kingdom. Any modes of seeking right things which shall act in these directions are reprobated, and are to be set aside.

Now, then, if your end in life is to be rich; if that is the thing which you aspire to; if that is the ambition which inspires you, Christ says to you, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth; do not seek things secular or things expedient from an earthly point of view. They are transitory. They are not sufficient for a man's needs and necessities. He breaks down under any such search as this." He does not say to a man that absolutely he shall not lay up anything. He does not say to a man, "It is wrong to make money." All the way through the teachings of the New Testament, throughout the teachings of the apostles, there is the recognition of property; and Christ himself recognizes it. He dined with rich men, and accepted their hospitality and their alms; and he nowhere rebuked them for being rich. But wherever a man is rich in money, sacrificing for it manhood, or neglecting manhood for it, his riches are such as are reprobated, and justly, too.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Now, if you shall say from this passage (as, if you take it literally, you must) that it is wrong to make money, then you substantially assert the other proposition, that the world would get along without any commerce; but we have speci-

mens among the savages in our own forests, and in tropical climes, where men cannot work, or where they are so lazy that they do not want to work, of the outcome of that state in which men are not inspired by enterprise; and we find that those nations that are freest to receive the gospel in its largest form, and to live under its dominion, and to develop manhood most perfectly, are the nations that have had the most thrift, the most industry, the most foresight, the most of those things which seem to be forbidden in this passage.

So far from enterprise and commerce militating against morality, I aver that these are the very methods by which God in his providence educates men—by which he teaches them foresight and sagacity. Our rising early and toiling late, and being careful in the ordering of our affairs, and becoming masters by the control of material things, and denying self, and practicing forbearance in the present for the sake of benefits in the future, thus living one day for the next, and one year for the next, and enlarging our horizon, and developing intelligence and thrift—through these instrumentalities God is developing morality and character in us. So that though commerce is not the school of spirituality, yet in the lower forms of morality it has been employed from the beginning in the providence of God as a school where men have been developed and educated in certain great primary virtues, or in fundamental honesty.

Therefore this passage does not mean that men are not to lay up treasures. It sets two ideas before them. Here is the manhood which comes from the kingdom of God in you, and which consists of righteousness, truth, justice, love, purity—in short, the royalty of manhood such as Christ inspires. That is one end of life; and making money is the other. These are set up before you. If your prime end of life is laying up treasure you are base indeed; and Christ says, "Lay not up as the chief end of your life treasures that are fugacious, and that will supply only your lower wants; but lay up treasures spiritual. Seek the kingdom of God, and then these other things will come, and will come harmoniously—will come without mischief in the coming and in the use.

"The light of the body is the eye; if, therefore, thine eye be sin-

gle, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

There seems to be no immediate connection of this passage with that which goes before. The connection is general. We are to remember that this is not a consecutive sermon, and we are not to look for a logical connection, every part with every part. According to the history given by the evangelists, our Master, after a day of wonderful miracles, went up into the mountain, and spent the night there with his disciples. In the morning, descending part way, he met the crowd, and seeing a great multitude, he turned back and went part way up the mountain, and sat with his disciples; but the crowd thronged about him; and he began to preach and to teach them according to the method that he pursued, which was this: when he announced a topic he was questioned by the people; and he answered their questions. There were interpolations among his remarks. We have no record of the interruptions and questions, but we have indications of them. We know that this was the method not only of our Saviour, but of the Rabbis in whose school he received his method of teaching. The questions and interpolations, which gave rise to many expressions, are dropped out. So there seem to be disconnections. There were disconnected passages in the progress of the discourse, but they all had a general connection with the line of thought.

Here the injunction is, Let the purpose of your life be simple and single. The great end and aim of your life is the development of the divine nature in yourselves. As when the physical eye is put out the whole body is dark, so when the spiritual vision is gone, how great is the darkness of a man's soul!

"No man can serve two masters."

Yes he can. Many a man does it. There are two masters in every family.

"Either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. He cannot serve God and mammon."

Ah! there is the explanation. Two masters that shall represent opposite principles no man can serve. If one rep-

resents lies and the other truth, you cannot serve both of them. Of two masters, if one represents justice and the other injustice, if one represents benevolence and the other selfishness, if one represents the carnal and the other the spiritual side, you cannot take them both. You can choose between one and the other; but if you take truth and spirituality and honor and justice, you must give up their opposites.

"Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

You can serve God and make mammon serve him; you can serve God and use riches in serving him; but you cannot take the essential, worldly, selfish, sordid, avaricious spirit that is called mammon, and be rooted and grounded in that, and at the same time be rooted and grounded in spirituality.

"Therefore, I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"

If you take this at its face, and give a literal interpretation to it, it will traverse and oppose the whole providence of God and the whole experience of civilized humanity. Take no thought? Take no foresight? Is, then, sagacity bad? Is forethought mischievous? Is it true that a man should undertake to live heedlessly in respect to food and raiment? Is there such an economy that a man may say, "I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore I will have no trade; I will follow no industry; I will not go to the market; I will not go to the tailor or to the shoemaker; I will eat nothing but what God's providence sends to me, and wear nothing except what God's providence sends to me"? What sort of a world would we have if men undertook to carry that out literally?

There have been such things attempted; and if they do not come too often and make too much pretension, as specimens they are very interesting. There are institutions that are said to be supported by faith.

A man opens an asylum for consumptives. He has no money, but he prays. He says, "If I look up in faith to Christ, he will supply all that I need." By and by he publishes an annual report; and what do we find? The man

has received enough money to pay the rent of large buildings. He says, "I let it be known generally that I had such an institution, and patients flocked to it." In his journal he makes this statement: "On such a morning a bill of three hundred dollars came in for food and various other necessaries, and I had no money; but my soul dwelt in perfect peace. I spread my wants before the Lord, and rose up and went forth without a trouble; and that afternoon I received by mail, from unknown persons, money—from one twenty dollars, from another one hundred and fifty dollars, and from another four hundred dollars. So I had all that I needed, and I paid the bill, and my steward was in amazement."

Now, let us test this a single moment, because it has all the appearance of following literally the face of Scripture. If there is such a provision as this we ought to know it. I am exceedingly anxious to build me a nice house on my farm, and I am exercised to know how I shall do it; and if I can do it by praying, if there is a faith by which I can go on and build, and have money that I have not earned sent me from north and south and east and west, and I can be assured of it, I will go forward and build.

A man wants to build a banking-house. Is it safe for him to retire to his closet and pray, and then go on building without knowing where the money or the material is coming from? And if you can build one house in that way, why not a whole street? And if houses can be built so, why not ships? If you can do such things by praying, and without thinking or doing anything yourself, why can you not carry on the whole work of civilization in that way?

I do not undervalue prayer and faith; but I believe that the vast achievements which we witness in life are the results of human thought and will and intuition. The secret of men's success in life lies largely in themselves. Certainly there was never a wiser adaptation of means to an end than we find to exist in regard to this very outward influence.

Suppose I should go into the street and limp with very great suffering, and, instead of taking a staff to walk with, should pray in faith, and a friend, seeing me, should run to my side, and say, "Let me help you!" Under such

circumstances I might think that my prayer of faith had brought me succor; but suppose every man should limp, then what? If prayer is good for one, why not for all?

I say that where there are results there are causes. Take the case of an asylum. In the first place there is an appeal to universal sympathy. If a hospital is established, and pains are taken to let it be known throughout all the length and breadth of the land that it has no regular support, but that it depends upon what comes to it casually by way of voluntary contributions, that fact is a cause which may account for the support which it receives. I think one institution during a generation in a nation might be supported in that way. But was there ever a net more deliberately spread to catch contributions than advertising that they are expected for such a good purpose? It is not prayer that brings in the money; it is the adaptation of a means to an end. It is the use of causes to produce a result. It is a wise appeal to the known sympathy of the human soul.

I believe in prayer, and in the prayer of faith; but I do not believe that God ever would make a tree forty feet high in an instant in answer to any amount of praying, I believe in the prayer of faith, but I do not believe that it will subsoil my farm, nor drain the wet places on it. I do not believe the prayer of faith is meant to be a substitute for our own endeavors, or that it is meant to be a premium on laziness, as it would be under such circumstances.

You are children of God. In fact, this passage says you are to develop in yourselves the godly nature. This is the great end of your life; and in doing this, in the full exercise of your power, you are not to be anxious. *Taking thought* is not the true rendering of the original verb. The correct translation is, *Take no distracting thought; take no worrying thought; do not be anxious.* The declaration is this (and certainly it approves itself to the judgment of every one): you are under the divine providence; you are seeking, as the great end of your life, the development in yourselves of the noblest manhood—namely the pattern

that is in Christ Jesus. Now then, in carrying this out do not fret yourselves, nor worry unduly in respect to externals, bodily comforts, food, raiment and the like. It is not that you are not to work for them, and think of them, appropriately, and that you are not to put such emphasis on them that fear for want of them should take away the comfort of your life. That is not where you live.

"Behold the fowls of the air; they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and yet your heavenly Father feedeth them."

There is an illustration; and how strangely people employ it! They say, "Yes, God feeds the birds and he'll feed us;" but did you ever stop to think how he feeds them? Did you ever stop to think whether he does not make them feed themselves? Did you ever see a robin bring up a brood of young robins? Do you suppose a robin gets on the edge of its nest, and says, "O God, feed my little ones." No, it sends them to hunt worms; and out they go, and work in the turf as hard as any creatures of their size should work. When the sparrows are fed by God, he sets them hopping through the hedges where seeds are, and along ways where insects burrow or hide. When he feeds birds he feeds them according to their nature. He has a providence which takes care of them in accordance with the nature of birds. Let us take the next illustration that is given here:

"Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? and why take you thought for your raiment?"

Which of you by worrying can add anything to your stature? Suppose you are homely, and are discontented, and wish you were handsome, can you by worrying grow handsome? Suppose you are short, and are at a disadvantage for that reason, and you would like to be taller, can you by worrying make yourself taller? Who can change an immutable law? Who can change the absolute facts that exist about him?

Then comes another illustration:

"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin."

That is certain. They do not work at the plow, nor at the anvil, nor at the loom, because lilies do not want the

products of any of these things. But do they not work in their own sphere, and according to their own nature? Is the lily dreamed into existence? Is not there a bulb? Does it not follow the laws of light and heat? Does it not grow by increment? Are not the stem and blossom the product of natural laws? Although it does not toil as we do, yet, according to its own nature, it toils. As there is a providence that takes care of birds, according to bird-nature, so there is a providence that takes care of grass and flowers, according to their nature. It takes care of them, not in spite of natural law, nor over natural law, but *through* natural law.

"And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these."

"Now, the point comes still, that although the bird must earn its living, there is no evidence that the bird has the habit of fretting or worrying about it. Birds go to bed at night utterly unconcerned about the future. They have no plans in their little heads. They doze peacefully through the night. In the morning they are up at twilight—before you are. (I state it as a fact, though you will have to take it by faith, as you will never realize it. They sing at half-past three o'clock; but none of you know anything about that.) They rise without any fever of desire, and go to work according to their own nature, and in the use of instruments which are indispensable to them. So God feeds them, and they are happy. These little unburdened folk, if you do not look too closely into their habits, seem almost like ethereal creatures. Yet they are full of monition and instruction in so far as the use of natural laws is concerned; and in their sphere they take care of themselves, without unnecessary friction or unnecessary fretting.

Men are likewise cared for, in the providence of God, according to their nature and within their sphere. Like the birds and like the lilies, they are called to do their own part in this providence; and they do it with the exercise and under the excitement of fear and apprehension. They vex the days with speculations full of pain and distress. And the point of the parable or illustration is this: in attempting

to develop in yourselves the kingdom of God, a manly character, you are under a providence that takes care of you just as it takes care of the birds and the lilies. You are to exert yourselves as the birds and the lilies do; but as they do it serenely, and without unnecessary fret and care, so you are to do it serenely, and without unnecessary fret and care.

This gives you light as to the doctrine of divine providence, of the providence of God, which I believe to be universal, and which I believe also to be special and personal, for the recognition of the minutest circumstances of men's lives. The providence of God is not the supersession of natural law. The moment you take away a man's faith in great natural laws, the bottom drops out of human endeavor. It will not do to take away method and certainty, and substitute for them the vagaries and superstitions of an erratic imagination. All divine help proceeds through divine law; and all special providences are by the use and under the cope of a system of laws. God uses them, we may believe, as we use them.

I am not bound by natural laws; I am not held in captivity by them. When we speak of natural laws we seem to feel that they are certain irresistible forces acting in certain definite lines.

Without attempting to be nice in the definition of the term "law," about which there is much confusion and much variation of statement, we may say that what are popularly understood to be certain divine laws are not coercive. They are not in any sense immutable. They are entirely mutable. They are not inconsistent with an overruling providence. They are the very fountains of an overruling providence.

In other words, you say, "I know the laws of light, of moisture and of heat; I know the laws that govern the soil; I know the relation between the seed or the plant and the soil; and it is because I know that these things stand in such relation to each other, and because I act upon that knowledge, that there is a certain growth and fructification." We make natural laws work in certain physical directions. The intelligence of the mind working through natural laws, and producing given results, is civil-

ization. Without the intelligent element, the great natural world, with its laws, would be empty. A chaotic period of the globe would come again, and no such thing as civilization would be possible. It is natural law directed by personal intelligence that makes the wilderness bud and blossom as the rose, and creates gardens, plants orchards, and brings civilization. It is natural law acting under the direction of human intelligence.

Now, all that we need for a better understanding of the divine providence is to suppose that God is able to do, by the whole scheme of the globe and the universe, what we see men do in special, in their place, and in their relations. If I can make my children happy by being a providence to them; if I can so control natural laws as to make my household poor or rich; if I can so use natural law as to make my average state high or low; and if men in general have this power, then much more may God, by his scheme of natural laws, and by his intelligence of them, constitute a providence.

It is under this providence that men are exhorted to industry, frugality, foresight and prudence, in all their relations, while seeking to build up in themselves this manly character, this grand divine nature implanted in them. While they are trying to do that, the Lord says to them, "You are doing it under a providence. You are doing it under a scheme of forces which are in themselves adapted for that work. You need not forsake your fields, your farms, your shops, your warehouses, in order to become Christian men. It is through the right use of these things that you are educating yourselves into Christian dispositions. The end of your life is true manhood; and he who is seeking that supremely is working under a scheme of natural laws—of a providence that will provide for you better than you could be provided for in any other conceivable way. Let him that would be true, be true; let him that would be humane, be humane; let him that would be moral and spiritual, be moral and spiritual; and he will find in the cultivation of these things a reflex influence exerted on his industries; and

his enterprises will yield more abundantly than if he had made selfishness and pride and avarice the motive of conduct in the great secularities of life.

"Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

If in the conduct of the lower forms of animated creation God can order his physical laws so as to abundantly take care of them, shall he not by the more noble laws that environ mankind, be able to take care of them?

"Therefore, take no thought [be not anxious], saying, What shall we eat? [never saying, What shall we be?] or, What shall we drink? [never saying, What shall we aspire to?] or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? [outwardly; and never saying, What robes and raiment shall the soul have?] for after all these things do the Gentiles seek [that is the way the unenlightened Gentile reasons]; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things [for your lower nature]. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Gain that, and all else that you need will flow from it. That piety which is of the large, true, noble type is sufficient, because it carries the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.

"Take therefore no [anxious] thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We rejoice in thee, our Father. Thy wisdom, thy power and thy glory we cannot compass to understand; and yet, whatever there is of thee, whatever there is of power, and of wisdom, and of glory, are ours; for we are thy children, and thou art our Father, and thou canst not be built up to an estate of power and glory that will not make us the more rich and the more blessed. Grant that the connection which is between us and thee may be realized, and that we may cease to look so much to the earth, as they that sprang from it; that we may look more and more to thee, and know that the true manhood in us, and which life is bringing forth, is of God. We pray that we may have the knowledge of the truth which lies in this connection of our souls with thine. Here is our life. Our life is hid with Christ in God; in that blessed revelation which he hath made; in that glorious faith which he inspires; in the power of that love which draws us by our inward and best nature to the divine. In this our life is hidden, in this our life is strong; so that they who love thee, and live in the trust of God and in the peace which passeth all understanding, are served by whatever there is of life. Joy is theirs, and sorrows are theirs. Thou art theirs in darkness, and thou art theirs in light. Thou art theirs in adversity, and thou art theirs in prosperity. Whom thou lovest thou chastenest so that adversity is robbed of its terror. If God be for us, who can be against us? What weapon formed against thee shall prosper? In thee we glory. We rejoice in the Lord; we rejoice from day to day with increasing joy; and we pray that the plenitude of this inward life, and all its remunerations of faith, may be more and more apparent to thy people. Open within them the kingdom of God. Widen it. Grant that its bounds may evermore increase with them. May it be for us, every one, to know within ourselves the true kingdom. May we therein from day to day be strong, and hidden as in a tower of defense and in a fortress, against our adversaries. We pray that thou wilt grant that the light of the truth may dawn on their eyes who see it not, or who dimly see it. And we pray that by the Holy Ghost the truth may be revealed in the inward consciousness and experience of thy people more and more amply; and we pray that in them thy precious word may be no longer powerful in the letter only, but in the spirit. May it be a disclosure in them. May it be transferred, so that the truth shall be understood by their living consciousness.

We pray that thou wilt bless all those that are especially in thy care to-night. All who have come bringing petitions and requests—hear thou them. All who ask for strength, all who ask for consolation, all who ask for guidance, all who ask that they may learn to love—by love cleanse thou them, and set them on their way toward the heavenly land rejoicing.

We pray that thou wilt bless this church, in all its works of love; in all its schools and missions. And bless the more those who go every Sabbath day from the midst of their families to give time and strength to those who are less favored; and we beseech of thee

that they may be prepared for their holy work by the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

Grant thy blessing to rest upon all the churches of this city, and upon all the pastors. May they grow in grace and in favor with God and with men.

We pray that thou wilt bless all instrumentalities throughout this land which are for the furtherance of the truth, and for the promotion of intelligence, and morality, and pure religion; and may those jealousies and those irritations which have existed between church and church throughout this land, and throughout the world, pass away, and be gathered among the things of days of twilight and of darkness; and let that blessed time come when men shall see eye to eye, and heart beat responsive to heart, and thy kingdom be one, though there be infinite varieties—one differing from another in love, one in trust and faith, and one in power; and we pray that thus thy name may be glorified in the midst of this people, and spread abroad the light of truth everywhere to the dark places of the earth and the continents in which night dwells. We pray for all nations. We pray for the ingathering of the Jew and the Gentile for the final glory—for that millennial day when thou shalt reign a thousand years.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

GRANT, our Father, that we may rest in thee, rejoice in thee, and seek to change these natures of ours from selfishness and from passion, and from all that is low and degrading, into truly divine natures of love, and purity, and peace, and joy, and of righteousness; and in this higher power of a redeemed and regenerate nature grant that we may not only find thee, but that we may make proof that in the wisdom derived from this higher life, all our lower duties are the more easily performed, and that we see more clearly, that we judge more accurately, and that we have motives for more patience in the fulfillment of disagreeable duties, and that we walk stronger and are mightier by reason of the things of the kingdom than we would be if, without that kingdom, we were clothed with all human power.

Grant that we may have this conception, that we may live more and more in thy Spirit, and that we may dispense with unnecessary thoughts and anxieties which spring from fear, and that we may trust God, and be at rest. We ask it through the adorable name of Jesus, to whom, with the Father and the Spirit, shall be praises evermore. *Amen.*

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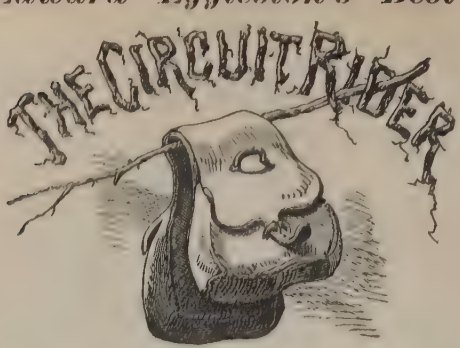

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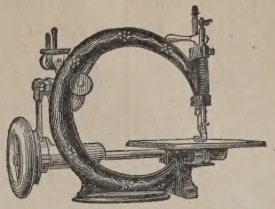

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